

What are we doing in the Child Protection Project?

In the Child Protection Project, we work to ensure that children have access to basic rights and services. For this purpose, we work in cooperation with public institutions and stakeholder organizations. While we continue our one-to-one work with children and their families, we also carry out activities and information meetings with children, women and men. We are continuing with training of trainers workshops for different workshop series that we have adapted to the pandemic process and also our efforts to strengthen the community-based protection structures. We carry out all our work by putting the perspective of gender equality

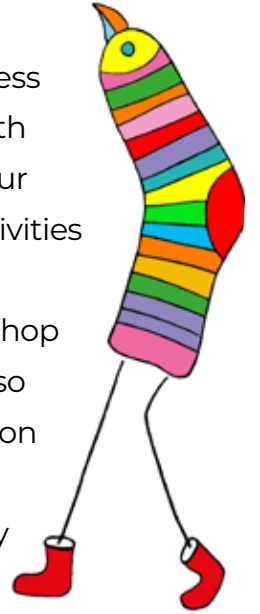
at the focus. This project, in which we aim to provide children with basic rights and services and to increase sensitivity about gender-based violence, continues by supporting one-to-one communication and solidarity with the field.

- What is happening in the Counselling Hotline?

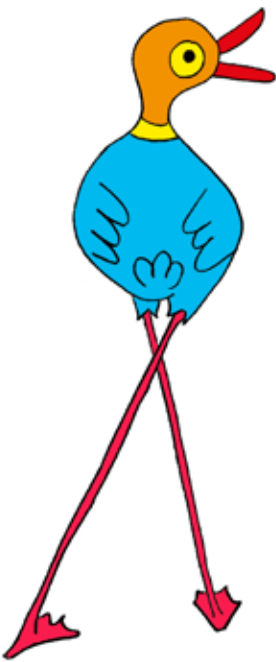
- Gatherings with Women

- What we did with the children

- Our community based protection activities



The suitcase
is always ready.
But not for
vacation!



Meşre family came to Turkey in 2019 with their two babies and only their bags due to the war in Syria.

The family, who came to Turkey to start a new life, has been both receiving threats from Syria and also being harassed for a long time by their upstairs neighbor, the landlord. The father, who has a health problem is unable to work and cannot find a job. Because of these economic difficulties, the family cannot move from their current house.

The family first came to us with the need for shelter.

First, we placed them in the municipality's accommodation center to meet the family's housing needs. They stayed for a while at the accommodation center. During this period, we've constantly been in contact with the family.

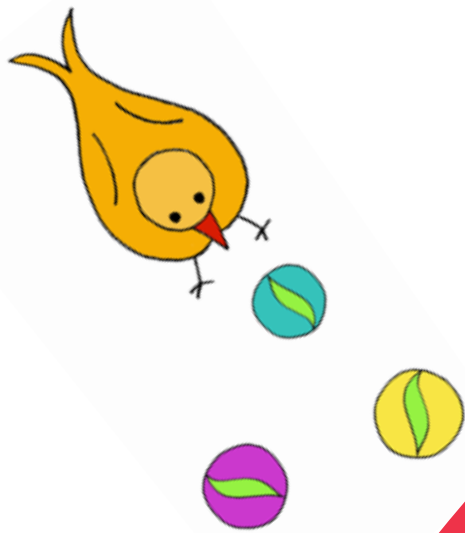
The family had met a lot of obstacles due to not knowing the language of the country they have just settled.

We provided interpreter support to the family when they needed it.

Family members were tired of being constantly on the move and were in despair. The mother was suffering from serious psychological problems and the father was taking care of the babies. We referred the mother to a health institution for psychological support.

Meşre family is always ready to go. But not for a vacation. For quick recovery in any situation. Many meetings to support the family have resulted in positive results.

They are now residing in a house, paying rent.



Access to Online Education with a Single Device!

In a family with 3 children, the children are of school age and are enrolled in school. The siblings continue their classes online due to the pandemic. During the hours of their classes, only their mother has a phone at home. Children can follow their lessons in turn on their mother's phone. However, because the school hours of the children are the same, their lessons often overlap. Children follow their lessons on the Education Information Network. A sibling who missed the previous lesson must first delete their information from the EBA and enter their own information in order to participate in the lesson. Continuously logging in and out of the system during the day makes things even more difficult. Children are not able to attend classes regularly, and they get frustrated of this situation and do not want to attend anymore.

Mother reached us with a request for financial support so that their children can attend classes regularly. Since the children did not want to attend school and were bored at home, we referred them to both psychological counseling and our activities. We also referred the children to the nearest EBA support centers to continue their education.

What is happening in the Counselling Hotline?

With the free Hotline, we respond to calls from all around Turkey, especially from Istanbul. We receive, reply to and follow up the requests of beneficiaries who call the Mavi Kalem Hotline every weekday. We evaluate the incoming requests and mediate them to reach the required services.

Counselors and social workers follow up the calls coming to our hotline in cooperation. Our goal here is to provide information sharing and prompt referrals by the counselor with the beneficiaries in cases where there is no risk or low risk. Counselor informs social workers of situations where children are likely to be harmed. Social workers re-interview the family and the child and follow this process step by step.

90% of calls to the hotline consist of requests for food and financial support. We receive information from beneficiaries to understand whether we can respond to their different needs apart from the requests they reach us.

Usually, there are a couple of other needs that we can respond to apart from the requests they reach us.

The beneficiary called our hotline with the need for food and cash support. During the interview with the beneficiary, we asked how many children they have and whether there is anyone 55 years or older in the household. The beneficiary stated that there are children and elderly people in the household. One of the children has a disability. We determine that he has a disability report, but has not received any financial support. The child doesn't continue his/her education. Individuals over the age of 55 in the household could not reach the central hospital appointment system for the COVID-19 vaccine appointment.

Although the request of the caller was different, we observed that there are very different internal



sensitivities. We have made many referrals for this. We registered the beneficiary with the municipality of the region where she resides for the food support request. We have made appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine. We referred the child with special needs to social workers for access to their needs. Many of our referrals have been positive.

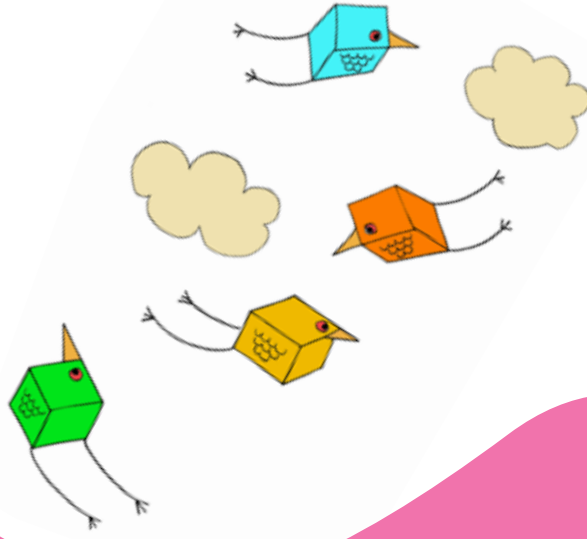
The beneficiary came with a request for food support. There are 4 children of school age and enrollment in the household. However, children cannot attend classes online due to the pandemic. Because there is only one device in the household. The existing device is not suitable for using the Education Information Network (EBA) system where the courses continue. Eldest child of the household, who is 15 years old goes to work with his father since he is unable to attend online classes. We identified many risks and sensitivities during our meeting with the beneficiary who came with a food support request. We made the necessary referral for food support. We referred children to social workers to ensure their access to education. Melek, the eldest of a family of 4 children who immigrated from Syria to Turkey, both studies and works to support her family. The father works sporadically, and Melek generally provides for the household. Melek is a high school 4th grade student who is very successful in her classes. She studies at work during the day and for school classes in the evenings.

Melek wants to go to university. However, in order to go to university, each university has to take the Foreign Student Exam (YÖS), which requires separate fees. She prepared very well for YÖS, but she has to pay the exam fee to take the exam. Melek will be able to pay the exam fees of a maximum of two or three universities in order to increase her chances of entering universities with a quota of 10-15 people.

She reached us with her mother's phone. She stated that she wants to continue her education, that she is a successful student, but that she is afraid of not being able to take the exam because she cannot pay the exam fee. After our meeting with Melek, we referred her to social workers. They interviewed with Melek on the same day. We started to investigate whether the stakeholder organizations have funds for such cases. If the research is negative, it will be evaluated within the scope of the Mavi Kalem emergency fund.

The consultations we provide remotely via our hotline continue intensively. We aim to find faster solutions to their problems with the hotline where beneficiaries can reach us freely.



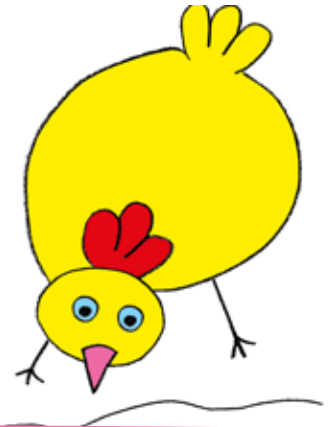


You can't sit beside me!

12-year-old Zehra, the eldest of a family of three children who immigrated from Syria to Turkey, does not want to go to school because she is ostracized by her friends at school. Because she is Syrian, her friends do not sit in the same row as her. They say, 'You can't sit beside me.' While everyone is playing with their friend during recess, they do not include her in them.

Zehra, who is in the 4th grade, has been studying in the same school and class since the 1st grade. Zehra, who does not have much motivation to continue school, has not been attending online classes for a year due to the pandemic process. The mother contacted us because she wanted her child to attend school. We had separate meetings with Zehra and her mother. Zehra said that she actually likes school, but she doesn't want to go to school just because her friends don't want her.

Zehra wants to have a profession when she grows up. We talked to Zehra that she has finished the 4th grade and that she already needs to change schools to continue her secondary school. We stated that the new school, new class and new friends would be good for her. We referred her to our psychological counseling because she felt left out and alone.



I want to go home from school, not home from work!

Naim, who is 12 years old, works in a textile workshop to provide financial support to his family. He usually has problems at work because he works with older people. He started to have serious health problems because he has a fight with someone at work.

His COVID-19 test comes up positive because he has been in close contact with people while commuting. Naim has had a hard time getting through COVID-19 as he already had health problems. He continues to have serious health problems after COVID-19. We had conversations with his mother and Naim, who reached out to us for health problems and financial support requests.

Naim "I was very young when we immigrated from Syria to Turkey. When I grew up, I went to school, but I could only read until the 4th grade. After that, I started working to support my mother and older brother. I am having a hard time working. I usually feel sad. I no longer want to go home from work, but from school to home. I want to spend time with my friends and study my lessons."

We referred Naim to a health institution for a health problem, to education to continue school, and to our psychological counseling for psychosocial support. We referred him to institutions and organizations to provide financial support to the household.



What we did with the children ?

Every week, we gathered together with children in activities with certain themes. We organize art activities on Mondays and Wednesdays, and activities to support well-being on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

To enable children to participate actively in programs:

- We group children by age ranges.
- We give responsibilities to distracted children in the activity.
- We pay attention to choosing materials that children can easily find in their homes.
- We receive and evaluate children's feedback in different ways.

With the activities we organize, we both support the well-being of children and enable them to improve their way of expressing themselves. In the activities, we want children to express themselves by asking how they feel, what they think and how they spend their time at home. We observe in almost all activities that they want the pandemic to end now. Children say that they are bored with the process of staying at home and they want to go to the park with their friends.



Fish from Children's Language !

As the pandemic continues, we continue to organize activities to strengthen the bonds of children who spend most of their time at home with nature. We held the "Fish from Children's Language" activity with children. In the activity we worked with the younger age group, we made a fish drawing after talking about nature and living things.

The children gave names to the fish they drew and imagined that they lived under the water with that fish and became friends with other fish. *I named my fish Güzel (Beautiful). Right now we imagine ourselves swimming in the water and with the blue fishes. We drew very beautiful fishes in our picture book. I named my fish Fulla (Clove). I love the name Fulla. Let's draw again I dream that I am friends with my fish. I would be afraid to live in the sea.*



We Are Learning Music and Having Fun !

In order to develop the children's sense of rhythm, we organized “We Are Learning Music and Having Fun” activities where they can spend their energy at the same time. Children combined their thoughts, feelings, excitement and energy with the rhythm of the music. We tried to feel the music by keeping the rhythm accompanied by the songs with the children. At the end of the activity, we asked the children to show their feelings about the activity with their body language. Some children expressed that they were happy with open arms, while others expressed that they had fun by jumping.

We Protect Our Health!

Last March, we held the We Protect Our Health activities. Schools opened after the semester break in March. Children would continue to attend school classes they had been attending online for a long time, now having to physically go to school according to their school schedule. In this process, where the impact of COVID-19 continues, we aimed to protect the health of children and those around them by paying attention to the precautions to protect them from COVID-19 with the We Protect Our Health activity.

At the activity, both information and feelings and thoughts were shared about the

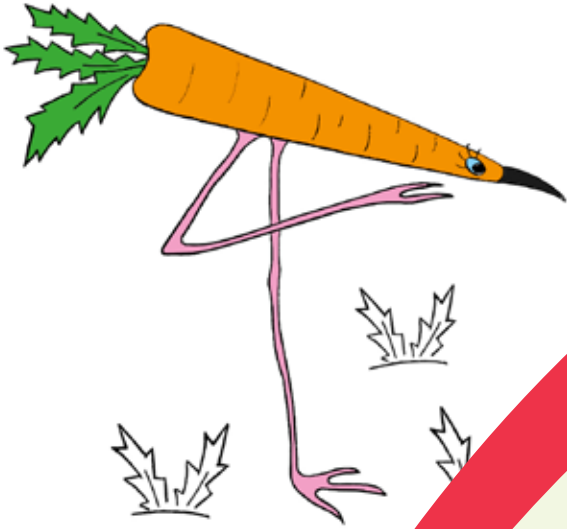


COVID-19 virus and the pandemic. Children stated that they were nervous and afraid when they first heard about COVID-19, and that they put on their masks and wash their hands frequently when they went out to protect themselves from the virus. After talking about the ways to protect themselves

from COVID-19, the children drew pictures of how COVID-19 makes us feel. Some of the feedback given by the children during the activity is as follows:
I heard about Corona mostly from TV. I was a little scared when I first heard it. But now I try to protect myself by wearing a mask.

I go to school on certain days and I wear my mask when I go to school. I also change my mask often. There is disinfectant in the school. I often pour disinfectant on my hands.

We must wash our hands for at least twenty seconds. I wash my hands frequently. We also need to change our mask.



Making Our Puppets Talk !

We made
puppets using
different materials.

We carried out the implementation step by step so that the children could follow the practitioner in puppet making. The children who named their puppets expressed their feelings about the activity by making their puppets speak with different tones. One of the children made the activity even better by singing. The children said that they would like to participate in the next activities and shared their suggestions. They said that they wanted to make a wind rose, make food bowls for animals, and draw pictures. Some of the feedback given by the children is as follows:

I had no trouble making puppets. I named my puppet Minnoş.

I named my puppet Prenses (Princess). I'll hide my puppet.

I named my puppet Bal (Honey). The activity went well. I also attended other activities. I love animals very much. Shall we make food bowls for cats and animals at the next activity?

The Language of Children's Pictures

Children may have difficulty expressing their feelings verbally. We held an online Color Paints activity with children to draw pictures for a living thing,



person or object that they care about in their own lives.

In this activity, we aimed to expand children's imaginations and to come up with creative ideas. We had a conversation with the children before we started the activity. After the conversation, we told them to turn on classical music, close their eyes and imagine the picture they wanted to draw and start drawing when they were ready. The children began to draw their pictures. After the drawings were finished, we asked the children who wanted to share their pictures with us to comment on what their pictures mean.

The children told us the stories of the pictures they drew. Some children had drawn trains and airplanes. When we ask where you want to go with this plane or train, we received the feedback *"I want to go to Syria"*. A child drew a picture expressing his sadness. When we ask why you're sad : She said, *"Because we will not be able to go out this holiday, we will not be able to buy holiday clothes "*.

A child had drawn the park area. *"Now I want to go out and go to the park with my friends"* she said.

Gatherings with Women

We gathered with Women on March 8, International Women's Day!

For women to be empowered, young girls should also be empowered. Gender inequality deepens as gender roles are passed on through generations with little or no change. Women will be empowered both by girls having better living conditions and by these girls transforming identities of women and mothers in society. Informative work is of great importance for women to gain more room for action regarding the rights and opportunities that both themselves and girls have. Developing and diversifying programs that inform and raise awareness are among our most basic goals.

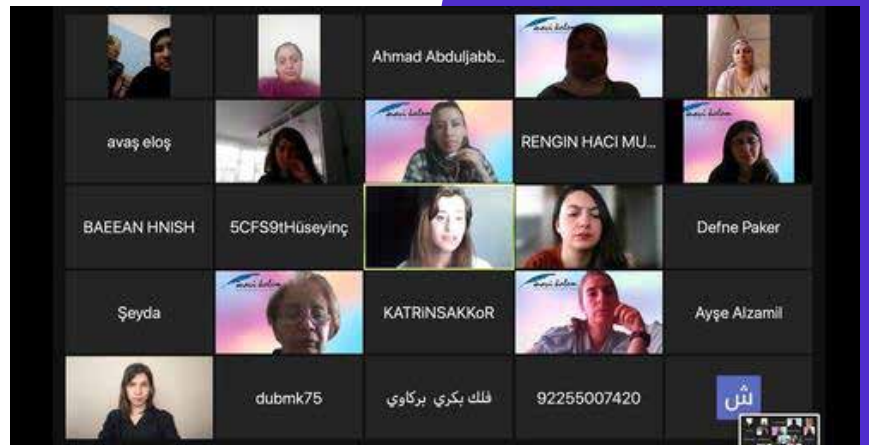
In March, when the theme of women's rights came to the fore, we conducted an information workshop with Syrian adult women on early marriage and its risks, as part of the 8 March International Women's Day.

We invited Syrian Pharmacist Hanen Elhamad to the information work we have carried out, who participated in the Training of Trainers of the Girls Empowerment Workshop Series in 2019 and applied this training in the organization where she works. At the same time, our trainer from Mavi Kalem's Girls Empowerment Workshop Series participated as the moderator of the activity. In the activity, we touched on issues such as what is child marriage, what are the risks of child marriage, how can we prevent child marriages.

Participating women gave examples from what they experienced or saw in their environment.

"I was married at the age of 14 and unfortunately I was persecuted a lot. That's why I said that I will not marry my daughters before the age of 18. My request to all mothers here is that you do not marry your daughters before the age of 18."

"I held my first child at the age of 15 and my second child at the



age of 16. They were crying, and I was sitting with them and crying. I was just a child and I didn't know how to take care of a child. .”

We talked about the negative consequences of child marriage and what can be done to prevent it. They expressed that sharing information about how to prevent early marriages especially strengthened them. After the question and answer session, our work continued with the rhythm activity conducted by the Mavi Kalem art instructor. We sang songs together and had fun. At the end of the meeting, the participants said that they would like to participate in more information work on women's rights.



We Talked to Women on Children's Access to Education

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to receive education regardless of language, religion, race, gender, culture and ability. Children are unable to access these fundamental rights due to economic difficulties, disasters and emergencies, and cultural codes.

While even enrolling in school is a significant challenge for some children, enrollment is not a guarantee of access to education. Many children do not continue their education after primary school. With the COVID-19 pandemic, social groups that already have difficulties in accessing education are at risk of being cut off from education altogether. In this process, remote education, which continues online, also interrupted the participation of many students in education. The inequality in access to the Education Information Network (EBA), the situation and needs of children with special needs to access education came to the fore.

In April, when the theme of children's rights came to the fore, we conducted an information campaign with Syrian adult women on the right to education of children. We invited Ravda Nur Cuma, a refugee rights advocate and Chairman of the Board of RavdaNur Association, to talk about children's right to education. Our trainer from Mavi Kalem's Girls Empowerment Workshop Series participated as the moderator of the activity. In the activity, we talked about why children's right to education, why girls' access to education is important, the difficulties children experience in accessing education during the pandemic, how access to education is affected by emergencies and what measures should be taken against them.

Ravda Nur Cuma emphasized the importance of education by giving examples from her own life. She told how she learned Turkish in a very short time to continue her education after she had to immigrate to Turkey with her family in 2011 and how she

struggled with the obstacles in front of her. She emphasized the value of her father's support of her decision not to marry and to continue her education, saying, "The most important thing for a girl is her family standing behind her". She said that all parents should protect their children against child marriage.



Ravda Nur Cuma told that on the way to found the RavdaNur Association, she first fought for her girl friends who were cut off from education when they reached high school. After visiting her friends' houses one by one and trying to persuade their families to continue school, she continued her political science education and founded the association in order to do this on behalf of more children.

She emphasized that education is the greatest remedy by saying, "No husband can protect a girl child more than education." When Ravda Nur Cuma asked the children about their dreams, some of them answered "reading" and stated that something that was their birthright turned into a dream due to the difficulties they faced in their short lives.

In her inspiring speech, Ravda Nur Cuma focused on the interconnectedness of the risk of child marriage and children's access to the right to education. Participating women shared the examples they experienced or saw in their environment.

"You came to Turkey at the age of 13 and fought under difficult conditions. You have accomplished great things. I also have two daughters. I certainly do not approve of early marriage. But unfortunately, there are many families around us who want their

daughters to have a home. They get their daughters married at the age of 14-15. I will not marry my daughters at an early age. As Ravda Nur said, the only solution is education."

"I have 4 children. 3 of them go to school and they do very well in their classes. They all have very different dreams. I am very happy when I listen to my children's dreams. I wish all parents gave their children the right to education."

"I was married at the age of 19. No matter how old 19 is seen by the society, I always felt like a child. As Ravda Nur said, we should not separate our girls from our boys. They should have equal rights. Because our families got most of us married at an early age. But we don't have to do that."

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Our Community Based Protection Activities

We aim to increase the awareness of the volunteers we work with in our community-based protection efforts with the right information and support and to spread this awareness to their social circles. We ask volunteers to raise awareness about child safety and child protection threats and to refer children they see at risk to us so that we can find solutions.

We gathered with volunteer women on the issues of child rights, child labour, early marriage and its harms. The women gave many examples from their lives and the situations they witnessed around them.

“-If there is a decision to be taken regarding the child, this child should also be consulted and a decision should be made according to what he/she chooses.”

“-When the child works, he will be deprived of many rights. It will affect their entire future life. Because the child works with older people, they can acquire bad habits.”

“-What does a child think when returning home from work or seeing a child playing in the street? Everyone has the right to live their childhood”

“-I came from Syria. My parents married me when I was 13-14 years old. Because I got married at an early age, I was deprived of many rights. As soon as I got married, I had a child. I didn't know what to do when they handed

me my child. I was crying every night with my crying baby. I faced many responsibilities at a young age. I was trying to fulfill my responsibilities towards society, my family, my husband and my child. I was deprived of my most basic right, my right to play. On the one hand, I was looking at the baby in my hand, on the other hand, I was watching my friends playing. I could not go to school. I don't want the kids to go through the same difficulties I did. I do my best to prevent child marriage. I think I will get better results by working with you. Now I'm old, I have grandchildren. I play games with my grandchildren that I couldn't play in my childhood.”

“-Child marriage has a huge impact on a child's life. They are deprived of their rights and this causes them to face many problems in their future life.”

In these months where we structured our activities, cases led by community-based protection volunteers began to reach us. Volunteers act as a kind of bridge between the neighborhood and Mavi Kalem by communicating the needs of the field. In our community-based protection efforts, we minimize the vulnerability of children by working with women, men, institutions and organizations from different segments of the society.

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Hereby these beneficiary stories have been written by changing the real names of the persons and using the techniques in accordance with the KVKK regulations; in accordance with the KVKK legislation, real persons are not specified in any way.